

CONTRIBUTION OF ANTIM IVERIELI AND MIHAI ISHTVANOVICH TO THE CAUSE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GEORGIAN PRINTING HOUSE

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Abstract

In the paper the services of Antim Iverieli or Iberieli to his homeland Georgia are discussed, which are especially immense in the matter of the organization of the Georgian printing office. Antim Iverieli was born between the years of 1650-1660 and died in 1716. The King of the Georgians Vakhtang VI asked the Patriarch of Jerusalem to give him a helping hand in the organization of the printing office. The Patriarch of Jerusalem Crizanth Natharas forwarded the request of the King of the Georgians to Antim Iverieli to Rumania. As soon as Antim received the permission from the Rumanian ruler Constantin Brancoveanu (1688-1714) to render help to the King Vakhtang VI, he immediately sent to Tbilisi his best printer Mihai Ishtvanovich.

Keywords: To organize, Organization, Printing Office, To print, Printer, Language

Introduction

I would like to speak about Antimoz Iverieli. The records of an Italian Anton Del Chiaro Fiorentino, who was an adviser of the Prince of Vlacheti Constantin Brancoveanu, help us to elucidate that Antim was called Andrea in a secular life. Besides this note, Antim is also mentioned as Andrea in the encyclopaedic dictionary of Brockhouse and Efron, Volume XXVII, p.275, in which we read: "Metropolitan Andrea, who by birth was from Iberia, and who perfectly studied the Rumanian language was a fine orator."

Some Georgian researchers use Antimoz as a name. But Antimoz is the Greek expression. Antim personally calls himself Antim in the Rumanian documents. As to Iverieli, this nickname means that a person who bears it is from Georgia, exactly from Eastern Georgia. "Iveria" or "Iberia"¹¹⁰ what is the Greek name for Georgia. Besides, in the books published in the Arabian language, Antim directly calls himself "gurji"¹¹¹ (this Turkish word means Georgian and it also denotes the name of a person of Georgian nationality widespread amongst the Mohammedan peoples). An academician Giorgi Leonidze asserts that Antim's nickname "Iverieli" is derived not from the Iberian monastery on Mount Athos but is identical with the Turkish word "Gurji" that in the Georgian language means "Kartveli" (Georgian) expressing nationality.

Antimoz, as he himself points to his own extraction, is from Iveria, migrated from the land of the Iverians (the Iberians) under compulsion.

Antimoz, who was kidnapped from Georgia, was bought as a slave in Constantinople (Istanbul) in the slave-market by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos who took Antimoz away together with him to Iasi where he taught Antimoz the printing of books in the Greek printing office founded in 1682 in Jassy. Exactly from this town Consantin Bramcoveanu

¹¹⁰ Iveria or Iberia - An ancient name of an Eastern Georgia (Kartli).

¹¹¹ The Literary Heritage, Book I, Tbilisi, 1935, p.169.

invited Antim Iverieli to Vlakheti when he wanted to carry out the cultural reforms and ordered the highly educated past master to organize printing.

Contribution of Antim Iverieli and of Mihai Ishtvanovich to the Cause of the Georgian Printing Office

Antimoz was a wonderful calligrapher, artist, architect, xylographer, engraver, and sculptor. He knew a lot of foreign languages: - Besides the native Georgian language, he spoke several languages, viz Greek, Arabic, Rumanian, Old Slavonic (Slavic), Turkish. In Vlakheti, Antim Iverieli established the four printing offices where the books had been printed in different languages. The first steps of the activities of Antim Iverieli as a printer in Vlakheti is connected with the printing office set up in Bucharest in 1678.

In 1691, at first Antimoz began to work as a foreman of the printing office in Bucharest. In summer of the same year Costantin Brancoveanu appointed Antimoz as a chief of the printing office.

In the same year of 1691, Antimoz published the first book translated from Old Greek into New Greek by Crizanth Natharas under the title “An Advice of Basil I the Macedonian to His Son Leon.”

Antimoz studied the Rumanian language well and in 1694 he was appointed as a priest at Snagovo monastery. This monastery is built on the island situated in Snagovo Lake which is at a distance of 34 kilometres from Bucharest. Antimoz founded the first printing office in Snagovo and took on the apprentices. In 1702, he left Snagovo printing office and moved to Bucharest. In 1705 Antimoz was elected to be the Archbishop of Rimnic. (The ruler of Vlakheti recognized Antimoz as the worthiest man for the post). Antimoz organized the printing office in Rimnic too, prepared the ground for a church service in order that it would be held not in Greek but in the completely understandable Rumanian language for the people in Ardeal, in Moldova and in Muntenia. With this end in view Antimoz printed the ecclesiastical books in necessary amount beforehand and, at the same time, conducted the ecclesiastical reform in the Rumanian language. All these ecclesiastical books had the inscriptions in the front: “Antimoz Iverieli – The Archbishop of Rimnic. On the 27-th of January of 1708, Metropolitan Theodose passed away who left the will according to which Antimoz Iverieli should be elected as the Metropolitan. It follows that Antimoz enjoyed a great recognition and influence in Rumania. On the 21-st of February of 1708, Antimoz was confirmed as the metropolitan of Romania.

Generally speaking, Antimoz was an uncrowned King of Rumania. The merit of Antimoz Iverieli is very great. It goes beyond Georgia and exceeds the frontiers of Rumania and it is considered to be of great importance from the point of view of mankind. Antim Iverieli was one of the reformers of the Roumanian literature. He was really a brilliant writer and recognized orator. He made a name for himself as the greatest humanitarian and enlightener of his times.

According to the famous Georgian scientist Otar Gvinchidze, Antim Iverieli besides his cultural and public activities took an active part in the political life of Vlakheti. He incessantly fought against the rule of the Turks for the liberation of Rumania. Antimoz Iverieli fought for an independence of the Rumanian Church and State. He was at the head of an anti-Turkish patriotic-liberatory movement. In his propagation he boldly revealed the dissoluteness of the boyars, their anti-patriotism and called on all people to fight against Turkey for the liberation of their country. The Rumanian authorities did not like such a thing. He was arrested, deprived of the title of Metropolitan and was sent into exile for life to the monastery of St Catherine situated on Mount Sinai, but on the way, as it is supposed, the Turk soldiers who were accompanying Antimoz, assassinated him and threw his corpse into the river. This event happened on the 12-th of September of 1716.

The Romanian people love Antimoz, mention him with respect and not only the street, the temple and the museum bear his Christian name and surname; there is also a separate corner describing and presenting documentarily his activities in the State Museum. His photos are taken into the street and are shown at the demonstrations together with the photos of their leaders by the Rumanian people.

Altogether Antimoz wrote 4 books, the prefaces for 10 books, the verses for 5 books, the epilogues (the epilogues) for 6 books.

Antimoz printed 30 books in Greek, 24 books in Rumanian, 1 ecclesiastical book in Slavonic, 8 books in Greek and in Rumanian, 2 books in Greek and in Arabian, 1 book in Greek, in Slavic and in Rumanian. In all, he printed 67 titles.

And now before we start to discuss the history of the first Georgian printing office in Tbilisi, let us find out who Mihai Ishtvanovich was with whose name the printing of the first Georgian books is connected.

Ishtvanovich, as is generally known, was from Transylvania or Ungrovlakheti, but he masters the “Art of Johannes Gutenberg” (1390-1468) directly under the guidance of Antim Iverieli.

It should be noted that at the end of the 17-th century, the orthodox population were experiencing a great oppression from the point of view of strengthening of the Catholic Church and Mihai Ishtvanovich was forced to leave Transylvania.

Mihai Ishtvanovich followed the road from Transylvania to Vlakheti which was already trampled down many times¹¹², - writes the Rumanian researcher Virgil Molin.

Mihai Ishtvanovich mastered “The trade wrapped in mystery” to such a degree that soon he became famous in the field of activity of printing as a fine past master. And now Mihai Ishtvanovich, the best pupil of Antim Iverieli, following the directions of his own teacher comes to Georgia. The activities of Mihai Ungrovlakheli in Georgia cover the years of 1708-1711 including the year of 1711. The worthy pupil of Antimoz deserved a universal respect in Georgia.

In the years of 1707-1708, in the printing office built by the order of King Vakhtang (Near the palace of the King, beside the temple of John the Baptist) under the guidance of Mihai Ishtvanovich the printers began to work. The printing office was the building consisting of ten rooms.

The type of the first printed Georgian books was made in Tbilisi.

Mihai Ishtvanovich, during the years of 1709-1711, printed ten titles at Tbilisi printing office. These books are: “Sakhareba” (The Gospel), 1709; “Davitni” (The book of Psalms), 1709; “Samotsikulo” (The Acts of the Apostles), 1709; “Kondaki” (The Songs of Praise), 1710; “Zhamni” (The Book of Prayers), 1710; “Lotsvani” (A Collection of Prayers), 1710; “Zhamni” (The Book of Prayers), 1711; “Biblia” (The Bible), 1711; “Davitni” (The Book of Psalms), 1711; “Stsavla”, “Tu Vitar Martebis Modzgarsa Stsavleba Motsapisa” (The Teaching, or How a Priest Should Teach His Pupil), 1711.

In 1712 was printed “Vepkhistaosani” (The Knight in the Tiger’s Skin) by the son of the archpriest of the crown court Micail to whom Mihai Ishtvanovich taught the printer’s trade.

The printing office of King Vakhtang existed till the years of 1709-1712. On the 23-rd of April of the year of 1712, Vakhtang VI was recalled from Georgia to Persia.

There was not printed any book in Tbilisi from 1713 up to 1717.

In 1719 was printed “Ganmarteba Eklesiisa, Kurtkheva Eklesiisa Da Kurtkheva Odikisa” (The Meaning of a Church, The Consecration of a Church and the Consecration of a Robe With a Depiction of Christ in a Coffin on It), which was translated from the Greek

¹¹² Otar Gvinchidze – Antim Iverieli, Tbilisi, 1973.p.174

language into Georgian by Kvipriane Samtavneli according to the instructions of the Patriarch.

In 1721, Vakhtang VI who had already returned to Georgia from Persia printed his own translation from the Persian language into Georgian under the title “Haiati”¹¹³ done while being in Iran and which must be considered as the first printed scientific book and which is the learned work of an astronomical content.

Conclusion

In 1724, Vakhtang VI went to Russia to settle down there. He took with him a lot of manuscripts as well as the printed books and lived sometimes in Saint Petersburg and sometimes in Moscow. He died in Astrakhan on the 20-th of March, 1737, and took his dashed hopes for becoming again the King in Cartli together with him to the grave.

Since Vakhtang moved to Russian to live there, the printing office which was devastated by the enemy (by the Turks) had been abolished for a long time.

In 1751, the functioning of the printing office was renewed by King Erekle II through an expert in printing from Constantinople.

Thus, it is getting clear that by organizing Tbilisi printing office Vakhtang carried out one of the greatest desires of the whole progressive Georgian people. Consequently, the first printing office in Georgia was created with the help of King Vakhtang VI, Antimoz Iverieli and certainly with the direct participation of the Hungarian expert in printing Mihai Ishtvanovich.

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¹¹³ Haiati (Haiat in Arabian) – means an astral world in the Georgian Language. In the ascertainment of the origin of this word and by translating it from Arabian into Georgian helped us the specialist of the Turkish language Ms Nana Tartarashvili for which we thank her very much.